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MEDIA RELEASE

Bates Smart delivers revolutionary design for national law firm

Australian architecture firm, Bates Smart is breaking new ground in law firm design, delivering a second workplace for Corrs Chambers Westgarth that changes the way lawyers work.

The recently completed Brisbane office at One One One Eagle Street in the CBD is part of a national design rollout being delivered by Bates Smart which kicked off in Sydney in 2013.

The legal workplace is the first of its kind in Brisbane, breaking the traditional mould of law firm design by creating an open and flexible environment which fosters a culture of transparency and collaboration, and offers greater flexibility and mobility for staff.

"The open plan layout encourages knowledge sharing and collaboration among and between teams, with a view to breaking down traditional silos and offering both physical and visual connectivity between all four levels," said Brenton Smith, Studio Director, Interior Design, Bates Smart.

The non-conventional approach to law firm design was met with some cultural challenges that Bates Smart innovatively overcame.

"By taking away the traditional corner offices that the profession expects, we had to replace them with something equally valuable. The luxury feel of the finishes, tailored technology, and high ratio of quiet rooms located immediately adjacent to the workspace makes it easy for staff to move between work points and select the work environment to best suit their needs. They have to be able to grab their phone and laptop and move into a quiet space quickly," Smith said.

A key design tenet was to work with the architectural qualities of the landmark One One One Eagle Street building and create a distinctly Queensland feel explained Hayden Crawford, Associate, Bates Smart, and Head Designer on the project:

"We've taken cues from the fig tree columns, which snake up the external façade of the building in the design. These soft organic elements contrast with the hard materiality of the structure. We have also drawn on Queensland's iconic Great Barrier Reef in the colour palette which adds a fresh and vibrant feel to the fitout, whilst still maintaining the underlying Corrs palette of stone floors and neutral hues."

According to Corrs partner and CEO, John W.H. Denton AO, the world class design of the Brisbane office has created an inspiring workplace.

"Our vision for a collaborative workplace has been translated to reality with Bates Smart's design. Our people are benefitting from award winning new technologies and greater connectivity," said Mr Denton.

"Our clients love it, too. The café and event spaces work equally well for business breakfasts, events and impromptu meetings. Our staff enjoy taking their meetings into these less formal spaces, which encourages clients to feel integrated into the business."

Clients are also impressed with the transparency of the design, which reveals the once-hidden engine room of legal practice.

"The design reflects the openness of the Corrs Chambers Westgarth culture, and our commitment to embrace new technologies, and create an open and flexible working environment," Mr Denton said.

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Notes about the design

- A focus of the design (across all state offices) is to reference the base structure architecture of the building. The base building columns of One One One Eagle are classified as public art. Bates Smart carefully considered how to integrate the design with the columns without detracting from them.
- It was important to reference the local environmental context without being overtly themed. Elements that add local flavour to the national design philosophy include references to the fig tree columns and the Great Barrier Reef colour palette.
- Lots of natural references have been injected into the design. For example, the custom joinery; the softness of the ombre rugs, which counterbalance the hardness of the architecture; and, the referencing of colours and patterns found in the Great Barrier Reef.
- The design aims for a luxury feel such as that experienced on first class airlines and this is reflected in the materials. For example, the workstations have a chevron mitred top with waterfall edge profile, and have been finished with perforated leather capping, premium milled fabric and custom re-toned timber veneer. The bespoke timber veneer is also used throughout on joinery, wall and ceiling elements. The storage elements are finished with an automotive grade paint finish as well as the timber veneer.
- The diamond timber louvers, which are an important screening device in the client meeting rooms, are a design element from the Corrs national design philosophy that has been used in other Corrs fit-outs.
- The perforated metal screen provides a permeable privacy feature in an accent colour that is reflected in the rugs and upholstery throughout. The colours reference those found in the Great Barrier Reef. The screen design, in folded perforated metal sheet, is inspired by the geometry found in design elements used in the client space, floor tile pattern and the diamond timber louvers, with subtle references to the base building columns of the facade.
- The designers played with materials to give the illusion of an indoor/outdoor look and feel. For example, the stair void screen provides both transparency and privacy much like natural foliage. Also, the continuous Barrisol light above the four level void subtly changes colour throughout the day to mimic the sky seen through a skylight.